# Leaflet or Advice for tenants

## What are Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP’s)?

Discretionary Housing Payments are extra payments made by councils to help tenants on Housing Benefit who receive less than full assistance with their rental charge and are experiencing some difficulty paying their rent or at least part of it to their landlord.

Payments are made entirely at the discretion of the Council and can only be made to help with housing costs (e.g. rent & service charges) and normally only for a limited time period to allow tenants to overcome the difficulties they may be experiencing.

## What are DHP’s used for?

They provide a weekly top up amount to assist tenants who have had their Housing Benefit reduced due to under-occupation penalties, arising from what is commonly known as the Bedroom Tax. Similar help can be provided to tenants affected by the Benefits Cap (mainly in higher rented areas like London or inner cities).

In other cases, help can be provided to offset restrictions on Housing benefit where tenants have:

1. Non-dependants (grown up sons/daughters) in the home who are struggling or unwilling to pay their contribution to the rent; or
2. Earnings from work which are constantly changing, causing frequent alterations to housing benefit that makes it difficult to manage budgeting; or
3. The travel & other costs associated with working have increased causing hardship; or
4. The tenant needs to move home but doesn’t have the means to pay a private rent deposit or offer rent-in-advance to the prospective private sector landlord.

The above are simply examples of the help available and should not be considered an exhaustive list.

## What DHP’s cannot be paid for?

Councils can’t pay more than the tenant’s rent liability or eligible charges unless this is in the form of a one off payment e.g. a rental deposit. Neither can the council pay for:

1. assistance with fuel, water or sewerage charges if these   
   are included in your rent; or
2. food charges for breakfast, lunch and dinner, included with   
   your rental charge; or
3. any reduction in Housing Benefit due to the recovery of a Housing   
   Benefit overpayment
4. assistance with Council Tax
5. any reduction in Housing Benefit due to a penalty applied by the DWP

## Who can get a Discretionary Housing Payment?

You can apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment if you are entitled to Housing Benefit and feel you need further financial assistance with your housing costs.

## How do I apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment?

You complete and return the Council’s DHP application which you can pick up from the Council or download from the Council website

Alternatively, if you feel you may need assistance, contact the council Housing benefit section as staff there can assist you to make a claim over the telephone or may provide you with an office appointment to assist you complete the form and produce supporting evidence.

Once an application is completed with all the supporting evidence, the council will normally act quickly, usually within 2 days. You should receive firstly an acknowledgement and a decision, normally within a further 10 days.

## How does the council decide if it can pay a Discretionary Housing Payment?

Each case is considered individually. But to succeed you need to demonstrate your need for assistance is in some way exceptional. The more unusual and deserving your case is the more likely a payment will be made.

To make it easier for the council to decide in your favour, try and be as comprehensive as possible with the unique details of your case and provide any supporting evidence. The Council might ask you to provide, in support of your application, things like:

1. your total income and outgoings; and
2. whether you have any savings; and
3. whether anyone else in the household is able to help you financially
4. whether you have any loans or debts
5. whether you could rearrange your finances to ease your situation
6. whether you or your family have any special circumstances such as ill health or disability
7. whether your home has been adapted for severe disability
8. whether you are subject to welfare reform changes

These are just examples of the information you might be asked to   
provide. If the council needs more or clarification on any aspect of   
your claim it should contact you quickly and may even invite you to   
an interview or visit you at home.

## How much help might I get and for how long?

How much you get and how long this is provided really depends on your overall circumstances both at the time you apply and what happens afterwards. A change in your circumstances could increase or reduce the award being made.

## If your request is successful how will the Council pay the DHP?

If you are awarded a DHP to help pay your rent, the Council will usually pay it by the same method and timescale you are currently paid your Housing Benefit.

## What if I disagree with the amount or period of the Discretionary Housing Payment?

As this is a purely discretionary scheme there is no formal external appeal procedure. However, if you disagree with the Council’s decision, you should write to them within a month of the original decision explaining why you feel the council should reconsider. The Council should pass the responsibility for this review to a completely different officer to ensure independence and objectivity and should notify you on the outcome of the review normally within 10 working days.

## What if your circumstances change?

You must tell the council about any changes in your or your partner’s income, investments, savings, benefits, as well as changes in your rent paid to a private landlord or housing association. The

Council also need to know if anyone leaves or joins your household. You should tell the Council as soon as any of these types of events occur so it can reassess the original award.

## Where can you get help?

XXXXXXXXX employs Financial Inclusion Officers who may be able to assist you. Alternatively, ask at the nearest Housing Association office or try the Council itself. Many councils employ welfare rights officers to assist you secure these much needed payments.

You can also phone us for help and advice on XXXXXXXXX. For   
details of how to arrange an appointment or home visit look at our   
website at XXXXXXXXXXXXX